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Movement in social orientations: a commentary on Kelley

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Abstract

After reviewing some classic contributions to the truly social social-psychological literature (Lewin, Horney, Festinger), this commentary outlines how and why Kelley's analysis extends and complements more traditional approaches to interdependence. Three strengths are emphasized, suggesting that Kelley's analysis (a) offers a much-needed situation-based taxonomy for different social orientations and interpersonal phenomena, (b) serves the ecological validity of social orientations, and (c) potentially helps us understand why classical dimensions of person judgment include not only goodness versus badness, but also movement-related orientations such as dominance versus submission, strength versus weakness, or activity versus passivity. Kelley's analysis can be extended by developing further domain-specific theory and methodology for examining the temporal and sequential aspects of social orientations, and by applying a means-end analysis to differing social orientations identified in Kelley's analysis. Finally, following Chuck McClintock (1972), it is argued that the field should reserve the concept of social value orientation to define allocational preferences relevant to valuing outcomes for self and others. This basic orientation should meaningfully 'drive' the ways in which we approach interdependent others, solve interdependence problems, and utilize interdependence opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

It is quite a challenge (to say the least) to comment on a target article written by one of the fathers of interdependence theory — a theory that has exerted a great influence on the thinking of many social psychologists, working in areas as diverse as

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cooperation and competition (e.g. McClintock, 1972; Messick & McClintock, 1968), close relationships (e.g. Holmes & Murray, 1996; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991), conflict and negotiation (e.g. Pruitt & Rubin, 1986), intergroup relations (e.g. Bornstein, 1992; Insko & Schopler, 1987) and decision-making in social dilemmas (e.g. Komorita & Parks, 1994; Van Lange & Messick, 1996). Commenting on Hal Kelley's work is also difficult because his work characteristically excels in precision and thoughtfulness (i.e. is it possible to detect inaccuracies?) as well as in novelty and comprehensiveness (i.e. is it possible to critique and extend this analysis?). This target paper is no exception, in that it offers a careful, thoughtful, and novel extension of Kelley's (1984) transition list analysis, one of the most important contributions to 'traditional formulations' of interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). In this commentary, I begin by reviewing some classic issues relevant to the concepts of movement and locomotion and the theoretical roots of the transition list analysis. Following this, I will outline three strengths of Kelley's analysis of social orientations and discuss two issues relevant to future theory and research regarding social orientations.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOVEMENT IN UNDERSTANDING INTERPERSONAL PHENOMENA

Traditionally, the concepts of locomotion and movement have been emphasized in several social psychological theories that are relevant to understanding social orientations and interpersonal phenomena. For example, Lewin (1935) has conceptualized social behaviour in terms of *movement* from one activity to another toward the goal of maximizing satisfaction or minimizing the frustration of a current need. Also, Horney (1939) identified three broad classes of social interaction, all of which emphasizing *movement*: (a) moving toward people (e.g. helping or pleasing others); (b) moving away from people (e.g. indifference, insensitivity to others); and (c) moving against people (e.g. competition, conflict). And, Festinger's (1950) concept of *group locomotion* refers to the dynamic processes by which groups may maximize successful goal attainment. Movement and locomotion were assumed to be key concepts in the analysis of interpersonal behaviour because these concepts stress the distinction between means and ends, attempting to understand the interpersonal 'routes' one can take in relation to the broader goals one seeks to accomplish.

Unfortunately, these models and concepts did not yield a logical conceptual scheme (or taxonomy) of *interpersonal* situations that help us delineate, analyse, and (ultimately) understand social orientations and interpersonal phenomena. For example, Heider (1958) summarized his hopes—as well as his uneasiness—as follows: 'When Lewin developed topological psychology, I had at first great hopes that it would furnish the tools for the representation and analysis of interpersonal phenomena. However, though the concepts of his typology were of great help in disentangling the underlying means-end structures in the actions of a person, they were rather cumbersome and in many cases inadequate in dealing with two-person situations' (p. 14).

I believe that Kelley's (1984) earlier transition list analysis and the analysis of social orientations advanced in his target paper would have satisfied Heider's primary concerns. The target paper complements and extends the transition list analysis, and offers a new conceptual scheme for analysing dynamic forms of social orientations and interpersonal phenomena. Throughout this commentary, I will focus on two concepts: (a) social orientations, which I refer to as 'interpersonally-relevant behavioural tendencies' and (b) interpersonal phenomena, which I refer to as 'the interaction-relevant and relationship-relevant consequences of social orientations'. Later, I make a distinction between social orientations and social *value* orientations, conceptualizing the latter in terms of interpersonal *goals* (i.e. allocational preferences, such as maximizing joint outcomes, own outcomes, relative advantage over others).

KELLEY'S ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL ORIENTATIONS

Although Kelley and Thibaut (1969) distinguished among several types of interdependence (i.e. outcome, informational, and response interdependence), in interdependence theory (Kelley, 1983; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) they focused primarily on outcome interdependence, or patterns of control over outcomes. Features of outcome interdependence—degree and mutuality of interdependence, correspondence of outcomes and basis for dependence—are assumed to form the basis for a variety of social orientations, such as cooperation, competition, and equality. Inspired by Chuck McClintock's work on social value orientations, Kelley and Thibaut (1978) extended their prior analysis (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) by assuming that individuals do not merely interact in such a manner as to maximize their immediate self-interest. By introducing the concept of *transformation* it is assumed that individuals may take account of interdependence opportunities—and constraints—in such a manner as to pursue broader interaction goals, such as enhancing long-term self-interest, joint interest, or fairness.

These traditional formulations of interdependence theory have been extended by Kelley's (1984) transition list analysis which focuses on both outcome control and transition control (i.e. control of *movement* from one interdependence situation to another). In this analysis, interdependence is understood in terms of not only the immediate outcomes associated with specific joint behaviours, but also the future interdependent behaviours, situations, and outcomes that are made available—or eliminated—as a consequence of enacting specific joint behaviours. Accordingly, the transition list analysis overcomes the limitations of the outcome matrix by more directly dealing with the sequential and temporal features of interdependence.

In his target paper, Kelley complements and extends the transition list analysis by offering a conceptual scheme (or taxonomy) relevant to understanding (a) the types of choice situations we might encounter in our interdependent relationships, and (b) the behavioural rules that such choice situations permit. In addition to allocational choices, Kelley distinguishes among four *movement or transition-relevant choices*, including (a) pre-allocational choices, which affect the options relevant to allocational choices available to the individual and the partner, (b) order choices, which affect the order of the two person's actions, (c) situational choices, which

affects the features of the situation the two individuals will enter, and (d) choices of situation-selection mode, which affect the manner in which the two individuals select situations. Moreover, Kelley argues that situations differ in the degree to which they afford these five types of choice (or behavioural rules). For example, situations affording allocational choices are most 'constrained' in that they can only be determined by considerations of outcomes, whereas situations affording a choice-of-situation-selection-mode are least constrained. These latter type of situations afford choices relevant to outcomes, information (permitting tendencies toward self-presentation and attribution), control (permitting tendencies such as dominance versus submission, initiative-taking versus passively waiting), situation selection (permitting tendencies such as approach and avoidance), and situation-selection control (permitting tendencies such as sharing or gaining power over situation-selection).

Two illustrations may help the reader appreciate why the earlier transition list analysis and current analysis of social orientations contributes to our understanding of social orientations and interpersonal phenomena. First, research on accommodation in relationships has revealed that individuals with strong commitment to their relationship tend to respond constructively (rather than destructively) to a potentially destructive, noncooperative act of the partner (Rusbult *et al.*, 1991). Accommodation not only affects the partner's immediate outcomes, but also provides the partner with a more congenial set of options (e.g. the partner is not confronted with a situation which inspires retaliation). Thus, accommodative behaviour is not only outcome-relevant but also movement-relevant, in that it shapes features of future interaction situations. Second, research on experimental games has revealed that individuals frequently wish to do more than simply cooperate or not cooperate, particularly when the interdependent partner continues to behave in a noncooperative manner. Many individuals wish to withdraw (rather than retaliate) when confronted with noncooperative interaction partners (e.g. Miller & Holmes, 1975). It is clear that withdrawal is not only outcome-relevant but also movement-relevant, in that withdrawal eliminates future options relevant to the dilemma between cooperation and noncooperation.

THREE GENERAL STRENGTHS OF KELLEY'S ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL ORIENTATIONS

According to Kelley's analysis, the concept of social orientations describes several interpersonally-relevant behavioural tendencies (e.g. cooperation/competition; self-presentation, attribution, dominance, avoidance, power issues). What are the strengths of this analysis? Does it provide a useful conceptual framework for the representation and analysis of dynamic forms of social orientations and interpersonal phenomena?

A *first strength* of Kelley's target paper is that it provides a much-needed situation-based analysis of social orientations, thereby 'furnishing a useful set of tools for the representation and analysis of interpersonal phenomena' and thus bringing us closer to solving the classic puzzle of how to represent and analyse movement and locomotion in social interaction. By identifying several types of

choice situations and the behavioural rules that these situations permit, Kelley's analysis of social orientations offers a conceptual scheme (or taxonomy) of situations for understanding various social orientations and interpersonal phenomena. Such a taxonomy is important for understanding social orientations and interpersonal phenomena because it is the *situation* that ultimately affords (or limits opportunities for) the expression of social orientations that in turn shape interpersonal phenomena. In short, we need to understand first what a given situation is *about* in order to fully comprehend the social orientations and interpersonal phenomena we observe. A logical analysis of situations, then, helps in understanding the different social orientations one can sensibly differentiate as well as the domains of situations that permit the expression of such orientations. Incidentally, a situation-based analysis can be construed as an antidote to models that focus on personality or attitudes without explicit reference to the domains of situation that permit the expression of such tendencies. How can one logically predict interactions of personality and situation in the absence of a well-developed theory of situations?

Indeed, because Kelley's taxonomy describes the possible sequential and temporal features of interdependence, it provides a convincing case for the importance of 'dynamic' social orientations (such as dominance versus submission, approach versus avoidance) in shaping interpersonal phenomena, and for understanding the domains of situation that permit the expression of such social orientations. For example, this analysis suggests the importance of the distinction between (a) 'passive' or reactive social orientations, in which the individual simply responds to features of interdependence (which is the focus of much social-psychological research), and (b) 'active' social orientations, in which the individual shapes future features of interdependence. Such situation-creating activities have received little attention (see also Snyder & Ickes, 1985).

A *second strength* of Kelley's analysis is that it makes an important contribution to the ecological validity of social orientations and interpersonal phenomena. Indeed, in many everyday situations current actions are not only outcome-relevant but also movement or transition-relevant, in that actions may influence future outcomes, options, and situations. Earlier, I illustrated the validity of the transition list analysis by discussing the interpersonal consequences of accommodation in close relationships and the withdrawal choice in experimental games. Beyond these illustrations, several lines of research that were inspired by concerns with ecological validity have employed paradigms that examine interpersonal behaviours that are not merely outcome-relevant. For example, paradigms employed to examine issues of 'procedural justice' have emphasized procedural processes that are distinct from behaviours that directly determine outcomes (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Also, inspired by Hardin's (1968) description of the tragedy of the commons, social dilemma researchers have begun to explore so-called resource management dilemmas, situations in which a current action determines not only the immediate outcomes for self and others, but also the state of affairs regarding the resource (e.g. the extent to which the resource can replenish itself; Messick & Brewer, 1983).

A *third strength* is that Kelley's analysis of social orientations may advance our understanding of the ubiquitous dimensions underlying person judgment and implicit personality theory. This classic work has revealed that implicit personality theories extend a dimension of interpersonal goodness versus badness to include a dimension indicative of dominance versus submission, strength versus weakness,

social competence versus social stupidity, and activity versus passivity (cf. Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957; Rosenberg & Sedlak, 1972; Wiggins, 1979). This is important because it seems unlikely that an analysis that exclusively focuses on allocational behaviours could fully capture the schemata that individuals employ to organize impressions of interdependent others. Interpersonal goodness and badness may be largely based on allocational behaviours, whereas dominance versus submission, strength versus weakness and related impressions may be largely based on movement-relevant behaviours.

TWO EXTENSIONS OF KELLEY'S ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL ORIENTATIONS

Is it possible to extend Kelley's analysis of social orientations? I see two broad possibilities: (a) developing domain-specific theory and methodology, and (b) advancing a means-end analysis of Kelley's taxonomy of social orientations.

Developing domain-specific theory and methodology

Playing the devil's advocate, one might ask: 'Isn't the transition list approach much more complex than the phenomena we seek to understand?' In fact, Kelley raised this issue in his presentation at the conference held at Leuven in 1991 'Social Value Orientations in Interpersonal and Intergroup Relations'. Although transition lists themselves are not exceptionally difficult to understand (or to construct), many readers may resonate to that comment. Some of the complexity of the transition list representation derives from the fact that this analysis does not focus on one particular motive or one particular set of mechanisms. If it were to analyse one particular motive (e.g. need for social approval) and/or one particular set of mechanisms (e.g. tendencies toward favourable self-presentation), the analysis would be limited to a narrow set of domains. And that is not what Kelley's analysis is about. Instead, Kelley's analysis is intended to serve as an abstract, comprehensive taxonomy of situation-based structures that can be used to identify a variety of different social orientations that form the basis for understanding a variety of different interpersonal phenomena.

So, is the transition list analysis more complex than the phenomena we seek to understand? If we want to fully comprehend social orientations and interpersonal phenomena, the answer is no. Interdependence situations are sufficiently complex and multifaceted that it necessitates a sufficiently abstract and comprehensive analysis of social orientations and interpersonal phenomena. One can even go as far as to claim that the collective result of approaches that focus only on one particular set of social orientations (e.g. allocational choices) in one particular domain (e.g. situations affording only allocational choices) is likely to yield a 'deficient equilibrium'. That is, we would seriously overlook psychologically rich tendencies (i.e. the interplay of a variety of different social orientations) that help us understand interpersonal phenomena. For example, would our understanding of interpersonal conflict not be enhanced if we take into consideration not only their allocational

patterns of behaviours (e.g. cooperation, competition), but also movement-relevant behaviours, such as approach versus avoidance, or dominance versus submission?

Nevertheless, given that a transition list-based analysis is abstract and comprehensive, it *does* challenge our theoretical skills to 'apply' this type of analysis to a given domain that is relevant to understanding a particular interpersonal phenomenon. In fact, it may not always be evident how such a comprehensive analysis directly contributes to our understanding of a given phenomenon. Because interdependence situations are complex and multifaceted, one important task is to delineate the key interdependence features of situations that underlie social orientations and interpersonal phenomena in a given domain (i.e. we need to understand first what the situation is about in order to understand orientations and phenomena). Also, in our empirical investigations, we typically seek to simplify interdependence situations so as to focus on what we believe is the 'heart of the matter'. Although research on social orientations and interpersonal phenomena is quite rich in terms of methodology, it is also clear that Kelley's analysis of social orientations provides conceptual tools, not methodological tools. Thus, one important task is to develop further methodology that is suitable for capturing the interpersonal and psychological richness suggested by Kelley's analysis.

Advancing a means–end analysis of Kelley's taxonomy of social orientations

A second extension follows most directly from my earlier discussion of movement and locomotion, which were assumed to be key concepts in the analysis of interpersonal behaviour because they stress the distinction between *means* and *ends*. Kelley's analysis of social orientations leaves open the question of whether the differing choices (i.e. allocational, pre-allocational, order, situational choices, choice of situation-selection mode) differ in the extent to which they represent means or goals. Would a means–end analysis not help us understand the interpersonal 'routes' one can take in relation to the broader goals one seeks to accomplish?

Why is a means–end analysis important? Theoretically, a means–end analysis serves at least three (interrelated) purposes. First, such an analysis is likely to enhance the explanatory power of the theory. How can we explain different interdependent behaviours, in the absence of a theory about the broader interpersonal goals individuals seek to accomplish? For example, what exactly does it mean when we observe an interaction in which one takes the initiative and the other passively waits, without a theory about the interpersonal goals that these individuals seek to pursue? Second, by advancing a means–end analysis, the theory might benefit from some 'prescriptive' or 'normative' qualities, helping us to identify rational and adaptive versus irrational and maladaptive means for pursuing a given interpersonal goal. Indeed, we can only judge the rationality of an individual's actions if we fully understand the goals that he or she wishes to accomplish (cf. the goal-prescribes-rationality principle; Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994). Finally, a theory that is able to identify broader interpersonal goals and the possible means for realizing such goals may also be fruitful for designing intervention strategies aimed at resolving powerful conflicts between individuals. For example, some conflicts may be created in the sense that individuals have used imperfect means for realizing

interpersonal goals, whereas other conflicts simply represent the fact that the broader social goals are conflicting (e.g. two individuals facing a social dilemma are simply unwilling to set aside some of their direct personal interests).

How can one accomplish the theoretical goal of conceptualizing the differing social orientations in terms of goals and means? Following traditional formulations of interdependence theory, this may be accomplished by using the *transformation* concept (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; McClintock & Liebrand, 1988), which defines broader interpersonal goals (e.g. long-term self-interest, broadened social interests, such as cooperation, competition, or fairness) in addition to the goal of pursuing immediate self-interest (i.e. when individuals do not transform a given interdependence situation). Irrespective of whether these interpersonal goals are guided by dispositional orientations, relationship-specific orientations, or social norms (Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996), such goals are undoubtedly important to understanding allocational and movement-relevant behaviours in settings of interdependence.

It seems reasonable to regard allocational preferences as ones reflecting interpersonal *goals* rather than interaction-relevant means. Preferences regarding movement-related choices (i.e. preallocational choices, order choices, situational choices, and choices of situation-selection mode) seem more closely linked to interaction-relevant *means* for realizing broader interpersonal goals. Consider, for example, an interaction between John following a tit-for-tat strategy, and Michael who seeks to maximize relative advantage over John's outcomes (i.e. Michael is competitive). How would we account for the observation that Michael gradually moves away from John (i.e. avoidance)? We can explain such situation selections by Michael's realizing that it is logically impossible to really beat tit-for-tat (i.e. tit-for-tat 'punishes' attempts to exploitation). John's strategy prevents Michael from accomplishing his primary interpersonal goal, and so Michael may wish to avoid John. Thus, this example illustrates a more general point—many behaviours (whether they are allocational or movement-related) can only be understood by taking account of interpersonal goals. And, in the final analysis, I believe that the interpersonal goals underlying the transformation concept (such as cooperation and competition) form an important basis for understanding the outcome and movement-relevant patterns of behaviour we observe among individuals.

Of course, it is not easy to cleanly differentiate between means and ends, in that means can take on value in themselves. For example, dominance may become a goal in itself after repeatedly experiencing the efficacy of such means toward achieving desired goals. One might be tempted to develop a scheme consisting of a hierarchy of goals—for example, in several interdependence situations, achieving fair outcomes might be the primary goal, and using fair procedures, such as turn-taking, might be a secondary goal. Similarly, one might be tempted to develop a scheme consisting of a hierarchy of means—for example, structural means to solving interpersonal conflict might be considered as more primary than nonstructural means, in which individuals will still be facing the situation that inspires conflict (cf. Messick & Brewer, 1983). The fact that I discuss hierarchies of goals and means might be taken to indicate that a means–end analysis is indeed quite a challenge, and certainly more easily said than done.

Finally, Kelley's analysis focuses on social orientations, which is a useful concept to define behavioural tendencies underlying both allocational choices and

movement-relevant choices. Yet, following Chuck McClintock, the field should reserve the concept of social *value* orientation to define allocational preferences relevant to *valuing* outcomes for self and others. The underlying assumption is that our social value orientations, at least to a significant degree, 'drive' the ways in which we approach interdependent others, solve interdependence problems, and utilize interdependence opportunities. Social value orientations reflect interpersonal goals relevant to understanding both allocational and movement-relevant behaviour. Indeed, as outlined by Chuck McClintock: 'The values that are assigned to various alternatives determine *the direction* of human behavior' (McClintock, 1972; Corollary 2, p. 440; emphasis added).

CONCLUSION

Kelley's analysis of social orientations extends prior analyses by offering a conceptual framework for understanding various social orientations, including allocational behaviours (e.g. cooperation, competition, fairness) as well as movement-relevant behaviours (e.g. dominance versus submission, approach versus avoidance). This analysis offers a much-needed situation-based taxonomy for different social orientations and interpersonal phenomena. Moreover, this analysis serves the ecological validity of social orientations and potentially helps us understand why classical dimensions of person judgment include not only goodness versus badness, but also movement-related orientations such as dominance versus submission, strength versus weakness, or activity versus passivity. Kelley's analysis can be extended by developing further domain-specific theory and methodology for examining the temporal and sequential aspects of social orientations, and by applying a means-end analysis to the differing social orientations identified in Kelley's analysis. To fully comprehend patterns of interaction, we need to understand the interpersonal goals that individuals seek to accomplish.

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